President's Report, 2005 – 2006

President's report to the AGM of the Royal Zoological Society on 21st October 2006, held in the Conservation Theatre at Taronga Zoo, Mosman.

Introduction

This year has again finished on a high note for the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales. The major focus of the Society is to expand knowledge of the Australian zoology and conservation of animal habitats. We achieve this through our annual forum, and other occasional seminars, publications, awards to authors and publishers, and a student grants scheme for research.

The 2006 Forum

Too close for comfort: contentious issues in human-wildlife encounters.

Once again this forum has been well attended, and the subject is at the cutting edge of the business of the Society. However, its success could not have been achieved without the combined efforts of Council members, Council members' partners, graduate students and friends. I'd therefore like to, once again this year, acknowledge the important role that these people play in the on-going success and professionalism of the Society.

Publications

Due largely to the tremendous efforts of our editor, Dan Lunney, once again the Society is in the throes of publishing a large volume of work: there have been two editions of the Australian Zoologist circulated since this time last year, and there will be a December 2006 issue circulated. We also plan to have the proceedings of the last two forums in members' hands by the end of the year. All manuscripts have completed their journey through the review and (where appropriate) the re-write process, had their final edit and are now being laid out, or if this has already occurred, they are awaiting final collation and printing.

Ethel Mary Read Research Grants

Each year the Society makes a call for applications for the Ethel Mary Read (EMR) grants. As always these were of a very high standard. A sub-committee of Council was convened by Pat Hutchings, and included Peggy Eby, Brad Law and Will Meikle.

The following awards were offered in 2006:

- Jane DeGabriel (James Cook University) *How do plant chemical defences influence the foraging behaviour of herbivores in the wild? Scaling up laboratory findings in the field.*
- Lisa Doucette (University of New England) *Behaviour ecology and thermal biology of Australian owlet-nightjars.*
- Enzo Guarino (Australian National University) *Conservation genetics and comparative phylogeography of Australia's biodiversity hotspot.*
- Elizabeth Liggins (Victoria University of Wellington) *Phylogeography of the common New Zealand skink.*
- Louise Pastro (University of Sydney) *Fight or flight: mammal response to the broad scale wildlife in the Australian arid zone.*
- Michele Sale (Deakin University) *The ecology of the swamp antechinus (Antechinus minimus) and the effect of ecosystem productivity.*

Whitley Awards

These annual awards, named for Gilbert Whitley, and awarded annually for over 20 years, are arguably the premier awards for zoological publication in Australia. They recognize excellence in Australian zoological publication. A sub-committee of Council, convened by Noel Tait and supported by Arthur White, together with a wide range of specialists, reviewed the usual excellent range of contributions. The Whitley Medal was awarded to *Adelaide, Nature of a City* edited by Christopher Daniels and Catherine Tait, and published by BioCity, Adelaide. Eleven other awards were presented:

- Children's Book: *Leaf Litter, Exploring the Mysteries of a Hidden World*, Rachel Tonkin (author and illustrator), Angus and Robertson (publisher);
- Children's Book: *Emily and Alfie*, Meredith Hooper (author) and Emma Quary (illustrator), Hachette Children's Books Australia (publisher);
- Periodical: *Wingspan, For Birds and Birdwatchers*, Penny Olsen (content editor), Sophie Knezic (production editor) and Andrea Williamson (designer), Birds Australia (publisher);
- Natural history: *Albatross, Elusive Mariners of the Southern Ocean*, Aleks Terauds and Fiona Stewart (authors), Reed New Holland (publishers);
- Conservation resource: *CSIRO List of Australian Vertebrates: A Reference with Conservation Status*. Mark Clayton, John Wombey, Ian Mason, Terry Chesser and Alice Wells (authors), CSIRO Publishing (publishers);
- Urban fauna: *Wild Neighbours*, Ian Temby (author), Citrus Press (publisher);
- Natural history of iconic species: Wedge-tailed eagle, Penny Olsen (author), CSIRO Publishing (publisher);
- Conservation text: *Practical Conservation Biology*, David Lindenmayer and Mark Burgman (authors), CSIRO publishing (publisher);

- Identification key: *Centipedes of Australia*, Mathew Colloff, Anne Hastings, Fiona Spier and Jean Devonshire (authors), CSIRO Entomology (publisher);
- Illustrated limited edition: *Marsupials of Australia (Volume 3) Kangaroos, Wallabies and Rat-Kangaroos*, Rosemary Woodford Ganf (illustrator), Mallon Publishing (publisher);
- Conservation manual: *South Australian Rangelands and Aboriginal Land Wildlife Management Manual*, Harold Ehmann (author), Department of Land and Biodiversity Conservation, South Australia (publisher).

Special thanks

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the important role that all members of Council play in the operation of the Society's affairs. However, I would like to especially thank Pat Hutchings who, as Senior Vice President, has played an outstanding role throughout the year, and indeed over the years that she has been on Council. I'd also like to make special mention of Dan Lunney for his amazing dedication as editor, but I couldn't forget his co-editor of the Australian Zoologist, Brad Law for his contribution. Peggy Eby, our appointed Membership officer, has been a tower of strength in a wide range of matters associated with Council's activities, not least of all, her role in ensuring that the Forum ran smoothly. Arthur White also makes and invaluable contribution to the Forum, year after year. Noel Tait has taken over the extraordinary effort of ensuring that the mail-out for our publications occurs in a timely fashion. Jean-Claude Herremans maintains our membership data base. Tania Rose and Nelika Hughes (volunteer) have substantially increased our sales of the Society's publications, and Tania also has the financial savvy to keep out finances on track on a month by month basis. Peter Banks is another invaluable member of Council, not least for all things associated with the webpage and membership database, and for ensuring that the graphics for the forum ran smoothly. We had the most amazing Student Workshop this year, thanks to Adam Munn and his team. Beyond these identified people and tasks, there have been a wide range of other activities and associated input from Council members, however, it is easy to forget the detail when the whole team pulls together, and makes such a wonderful contribution that often the whole running of the Council appears to be seamless with individuals making a substantial contribution in such an effortless way that it passes almost without notice. To all of you, for all of your support, I thank you – the Society is in a strong position because of your continued individual and collective contributions.

Farewells and welcomes

Sadly, Ron Strahan resigned from Council in the last year. His contribution to Council over many, many years has been arguably among the longest, and most sustained, in the Council's history. It is with great pleasure that we were able to welcome him today on his return to Sydney especially to be at the Forum.

Our Executive Officer, Gilly Simpson also retired this year. I'd like to acknowledge her commitment to the Society over the years, and specifically her support to the Council. With Gilly's retirement we have been extremely fortunate in acquiring Margaret Knoor who is rapidly fitting in and learning the ropes. I look forward to her supporting Peter Banks' efforts in bringing the Society into the 21st Century. Welcome Margaret, please be patient – we are really a loveable bunch – you just have to get to know us.

Finally, I'd like to announce that with a promotion within the University of Western Sydney, I'm afraid that I no longer have the time to commit to being President, and it is with great reluctance that I step aside.

A/Prof. Shelley Burgin
President.